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THE FARMERS' YEARBOOK.

A new issue of the Yearbook, the great popular annual of the United States Department of Agriculture, has appeared. In size, appearance, and contents, the Yearbook for 1908 is very similar to its predecessors, and it will doubtless be of interest and value to people engaged in agricultural pursuits.

For nearly half a century the "Agricultural Report" appeared every year until the name became so firmly fixed in the public mind that it is still current though fourteen years have elapsed since Congress substituted the Yearbook for the old Report. In fact, Congressmen still speak of their stocks of "Agricultural Reports," which about the Capitol and Government Printing Office are familiarly known as "Ags.," and thousands of farmers every year write for "Agricultural Reports" when it is the Yearbook they want, and that is what they get. It is true there is still an "Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture," but it contains merely—to quote the law—"the purely business and executive matter which it is necessary for the Secretary to submit to the President and Congress." Only a small edition of this report is printed.

The Yearbook, on the other hand, must "contain such reports from the different Divisions and Bureaus, and such papers prepared by their special agents, accompanied by suitable illustrations, as shall be specially suited to interest and instruct the farmers of the country." The Yearbook must also "include a general report of the operations of the Department." Besides these there is an appendix which includes the organization of the Department; a directory of the leading farmers' organizations, agricultural colleges, experiment stations, etc.; a brief review of the weather conditions prevailing in all parts of the country during the year; an account of the prevalence of insect pests and fungous diseases; a report of the progress made in soil survey work, in forestry, and along other important lines; and last, though by no means least, a very complete collection of the latest reliable statistics of crops, animal products, exports, imports, etc.

As already stated the Yearbook for 1908 is similar in plan and scope to its predecessors. The primary feature is the Secretary's Report giving "a general account of the operations of the Department." Secretary Wilson also gives a brief summary of the agricultural progress of the United States during the twelve years since he became the Department's head.

The 23 popular papers designed to "interest and instruct the farmers," which occupy 304 pages of this issue, are strictly new and original, and they cover a field almost as wide as agriculture itself. Only a few of the salient features can be mentioned. A. F. Woods discusses the "Wastes of the farm," and tells how intelligent farmers may prevent many of them. A. K. Fisher tells how wild birds and mammals benefit the farmer, and therefore deserve his friendship. Frank Andrews contributes an instructive paper on "Cost and methods of transporting meat animals." C. V. Piper gives an account of "The search for new leguminous forage crops" especially in India, Japan, China, and Siberia, whence many valuable species have been introduced. The plague of mice which recently occurred in Nevada is described by Stanley E. Piper. David E. Lantz tells how to use poisons in destroying coyotes, prairie dogs, rats, mice, etc.; and A. L. Quaintance tells how to destroy orchard insects by spraying. D. A. Seeley describes the devices used in observing the weather and tells the farmer how to try his hand at weather forecasting. W. A. Taylor describes "Some promising new varieties" of apples, peaches, persimmons, and pecans, and these are illustrated with colored plates. "The small farm" as a means of improving "southern rural conditions" is presented by S. A. Knapp. R. H. Sullivan denies that "the so-called change of climate in the semiarid west" is a reality. W. J. Spillman discusses "Types of farming;" C. O. Townsend, by-products of the beet-sugar industry; and M. Dorset, the cause and prevention of hog cholera.

The foregoing amply illustrate the character of the papers. Probably the most notable of the statistical tables are those showing (1) The production and value of the cotton crops of the United States since the year 1779, together with the exports, imports, and consumption of cotton; (2) the same facts relating to tobacco since the year 1611, or for nearly 300 years; and (3) the international trade in hides and skins.

The volume is illustrated with 29 text figures and 55 full-page plates, of which 13 are colored.

Of the Yearbook, it is customary to issue 500,000 copies. Of these the Secretary of Agriculture is allowed only 30,000, which is not a sufficient number to supply the voluntary weather observers, crop correspondents, and others to whom the Department is under obligations for services. The farmers of the country have to depend for copies on the Senators, Representatives, and Delegates in Congress, each of whom has a quota of about 1,000 copies.

